

Census separations occurring now, in early October

[REDACTED]
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To: CRD LHK <LHKCRD@cand.uscourts.gov>

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Tuesday, October 6, 2020

Dear Judge Koh:

I am a Census enumerator in Portland, Oregon. I was informed this afternoon that I and most other Portland enumerators were being separated, and that my Census gear was to be collected immediately. This separation seems premature with a temporary layoff being a more reasoned approach, as well as being one consistent with your previous order. Parts of Oregon (and probably of Washington) have relatively poor response rates and may need more effort than personnel locally available can provide. Similarly other states; since, while I have been writing this, my Census phone received a message stating that volunteers traveling to Alabama, Louisiana, South Carolina, Arizona, Montana, Georgia or Mississippi for a week would receive a \$500 bonus.

I can personally attest to some of the needs. I returned on Sunday from being deployed to Southern Oregon as part of a group from the Portland Office that had been temporarily transferred to the Eugene Office to help with the enumeration. Most of Oregon (area-wise) seems to be served from the Eugene office, and last week groups were deployed from Portland to Medford, (along the I-5 corridor in southern Oregon), to Bend (on the East side of the Cascades), and to Coos Bay (on the Coast). Earlier groups had been deployed to The Dalles (on the Columbia) and Madras (east of the Cascades and north of Bend). Before going to Medford I went to Madras and to Moses Lake, Washington on similar assignments. Before I left Medford (on Sunday), had been assigned cases on the east side of the Cascades — north of, well east of, and in the immediate area of Klamath Falls — implying the count remains incomplete in many of the less populated areas of Oregon. However, we were informed that all travel was ended, with all groups returning to Portland.

I was phoned this afternoon by a supervisor who informed me I was being terminated and that he was to retrieve my gear. I told him that this early layoff seemed to fly in the face of the standard Census practice of reallocating resources to where needed toward the end of a survey. Later I was called by a higher up — I did not catch her name or position, but a personal phone seems to have been used — who told me that the word had come down that since all travel had been stopped, all enumerators excess of those required for local work were to be terminated immediately. Portland being largely finished, only 24 enumerators were to be retained. The termination decision had been made so hastily that the supervisor did not know when I would receive the paperwork needed to apply for another federal job.

This policy would prevent having staff available for travel at the end of the month to under-served areas, since the only fully staffed areas would be those needing support at that time. How this new policy on separations squares with the message that arrived on my Census phone is mysterious to me. However, since I interpret your previous order on separations of Census staff as indicating few terminations should be taking place, the new policy seems to be in violation; so I thought you ought to be informed.

I prefer to be anonymous in this matter to avoid problems with future employment.

[REDACTED]
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